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ABSTRACT

In 1984 the Commission of the European Communities (EEC) disbursed some $1.437 billion in support of a range of retraining, relocation, and job creation measures intended to help youth. The EEC's policy toward vocationalization was first defined in 1963. In the 1970s the commission began to reassess its reason for existence, which led it to develop an expanded view of its spheres of interest and thus resulted in the establishment of the EEC's Community Education Action Program. Since 1977 the commission has been involved in an extensive international collaborative research effort on the education and training needs of school leavers facing difficulty in obtaining employment, problems of poor motivation to study and work, compensatory action to increase educational opportunities for special needs groups, articulation between secondary and postsecondary vocational preparation, development of continuing guidance and counseling services, and improvement of pre- and inservice teacher education. The EEC has been devoting increasing attention to the problems of youth unemployment and integration of general, vocational, and work experience programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Emphasis on coordinate planning for vocationalization has been increasing, and the new approach has been based on the following major points: strengthening the general level of education during compulsory schooling, developing initial and complementary training grounded in a broad range of related occupations, identifying new options for lifelong continuing education, organizing such training on the basis of modular units, and reinforcing corresponding guidance and vocational training services to underpin the development of vocational training. (MN)

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POLICY AND RESPONSE: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS AND PRIORITIES IN THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING POLICY OF THE E.E.C. COMMISSION

Guy Neave

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IN THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING POLICY

OF THE E.E.C. COMMISSION.

Guy NEAVE.

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POLICY AND RESPONSE:
CHANGING PERCEPTIONS AND PRIORITIES
IN THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING POLICY
OF THE EEC COMMISSION.

Introduction

Some years ago,in a moment of supreme tedium,I lit upon a short story in the science fiction genre. And though I cannot recall the plot,the title was striking and remains with me yet. It was called "The Nine Thousand,Nine Hundred and Ninety Nine Names of God". You may say that the linkage between the Divinity and vocationalisation is,at best,tenuous and at worst, in high bad taste. But the link is there and implicitly the agenda of this conference acknowledges it. So what is it? The link is between the two lies in the fact that both the Almighty and vocationalisation each constitute a single phenomenon, subject to multiple manifestations quite apart from interpretations.

The perspectives involved in study vocationalisation are many. From a sociological-historical context,it may be regarded as yet another step in the protracted process that has extended the period of childhood and,at the same time,reinforced institutional dependence. It may be seen from an economic context from which setting vocationalisation stands as one element or response to the twin imperatives on the one hand to "stock" skills that prolong youth unemployment might cause to be lost or,on the other, as part of that massive occupational change which,we are lead to believe,a high technology-based economy will bring about. Similarly,vocationalisation may be interpreted from the standpoint of its curricular aspect,that is from the operationalisation of particular skills and their location in relevant points of the education or training systems. A further perspective from which this issue could be examined is that of educational planning and the various techniques,budgetary,human resource allocation and training,the levels and type of labour force to which they contribute,all of which sub tend the planning process. Last but not least,there is what faute de mieux,could be called the perspective of political sociology. This latter might see vocationalisation as an example of how governments seek to alter prevalent and established value systems in education towards what some might call "a new realism" and others,less charitably diposed,might see as a "new utilitarianism".

Thus,we can examine vocationalisation each from within the canons of her or his disciplinary theology and in so doing, emphasize one facet of particular manifestation of the whole as against another. Certainly,other interpretational and disciplinary frameworks exist. And if I have not mentioned them earlier,it is because I think the examples just mentioned serve

to back the original point - namely, that in discussing the topic of vocationalisation,there is rightly,a plurality of interpretations that can be brought to bear. What most of these have in common,however, is their focus on policy at the stage of implementation - that is within the school or within the training system,irrespective of whether these are located in the public sector - which is more likely the case - or in the private sector - which tends increasingly to be a major growth area as firms assume responsibility for the training of their work force.

Examining policy at the implementation stage is vital. It gives us a notion of how far objectives set have been met. It also gives us equally important indications of how they have not. And,from the standpoint of young people - and those not so young -it is the ultimate test of how far the planner's intentions have born fruit. But there is another aspect to policy and to this vocationalisation is no exception. This is the matter of policy formulation. It turns around the perceptions of priorities,how the problèmatique is conceived and negotiated by those who have either responsibility for developing such measures or,alternatively,who occupy a key role in scanning a range of options which set the outer bounds within which implementation is itself set. It is to the formulation
aspect that this paper is addressed.

The Commission of the European Communities.

There are several reasons that justify the choice of the Commiss -ion of the European Communities as a case study. The first,and most obvious, is that policy formulation rests upon a 'comparati -ve dimension'; the second is that the Communities,unlike other international bodies, rest upon a juridical base which,in certai -n instances, provides for legislation that is binding upon Member States and enforceable by sanction. This,of course,is rarely used. But it is this feature that separates the Commissio -n from say,OECD, the Council of Europe or UNESCO. From a consti tutional point of view,the Commission occupies a rare and unique situation: it has powers both of legislative and executive. Third, it provides a permanent and high level forum to debate, to consider proposals for action at Community level and,sometime -s, to exercise a surveillance and monitoring function. Amongst these the Education Committee,composed of permanent delegates from the Member States and the Commission's representatives, and the Advisory Council for Vocational Training,made up of government, employers' and employees' delegates and the Commissi -on officials,are the most salient. Fourth, and of course the least relevant of all,is the considerable financial resources that may back policy development. Money,as the Emperor Napoléon I remarked,is the sinew of war. And as with war,so with policy formulation: without monetary backing,what passes for policy is little more than the hortatory statement of the impotent and the hamstrung! As an indication of the resources available, in 1984,some ECU 1,437,000,000 was disbursed by the European Social Fund in support of a range of measures to assist young

people - in retraining,relocation and job creation. (Education and vocational training within the Eurpean Community: activities of the Commission of the European Communities in 1983 and 1984,COM (85) 134 final,Bruxelles,March 1985 (mimeo)p.14)
Finally, though our relations with Europe of the 12 fluctuate to ministerial humour and national self-interest,the general drift of policy development in this domain and at this level tends to remain an unknown land for most education specialists.

Origins of Community policy.

If we take the process of 'vocationalisation' as being broadly aimed at introducing new skills into the curriculum as a means of creating a better 'match' between the output of school and training systems on the one hand with the perceived requirements of industry on the other,then it is immediately evident that Community developments in this area have a dual origin. This dual origin was not merely organisation and administrative,it was also juridical . Organisationally,vocational training remained a responsibility separate from Education. The former came under the purlieu of Directorate General V in charge of Social Affairs. The latter was added to the general oversight of Directorate General XII whose remit covered Research and Science. To this,Education was added in 1974. (Education in the European Community",Bulletin of the European Communities (supplement) No.3,1974.) Legally, vocational training is a matter of Community competence based on articles 57,118 and 128 of the Treaty of Rome. Education,however,is not formally mentioned and resides on a special formula designed to stress the voluntary nature of the meeting of Member State Ministers of Education.("Mise en oeuvre dun programme d'action au niveau communautaire",Document SEC (76) 216,January 21st 1976)

There were,in effect, two clearly differentiated organisational contexts in which the issue of vocationalisation emerged. The first of these involved vocational training per se and was defined in 1963. A number of general guidelines were set out as part of a general strategy to move towards a common policy in this area. ('Council decision of April 2nd 1963 laying down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy',Document 63/266/EEC Official Journal,April 10th 1963.) In essence,vocational training policy was seen as an instrument for encouraging mobility of labour across the then six Member States, an interpretation which corresponded to the prevalent view of the Community as primarily an economic entity. And the major element in such a policy was informational - that is,enhanced vocational guidance as a lever to this end. Though intentions were to move towards a policy common to all Member States,intention does not imply capability. Several reasons account for this. First,vocational guidance did not enjoy a high priority on the agenda of Member States; second,resources inside the Commission were relatively limited and third,because responsibility for this area tended to be dispersed across different Ministries - Education,Labour, Agriculture etc - within the Member States.

The second organisation context began to emerge in the course of the early Seventies,urged on by a reinterpretation of the

Community's long-term raison d'être. This interpretation took the view that the Community could not remain simply as an econom -ic conglomerate,but had,if it were to enage the support of its citizens,assume a cultural commonalty as well. And he who talks of culture must very soon turn his attention to education as a means of transmitting whatever heritage is deemed to be common! The establishment of an Education service in 1974 and the creation of a Community Education Action Programme in 1976 was a specific response to an expanded view of the Communities' spheres of interest. However, in contrast to the basic goal of a vocational training policy which was to work towards harmon isation,Education from the first,set its face against this imperative. "Harmonisation of these systems and policies,"it was stated," cannot be considered as an end in itself."

("Resolution of June 6th 1974",Official Journal No.C,982,August 20th 1974.)

Effectively,issues involving vocationalisation were split betwee -n two different services,with a different juridical base and,no less important,different strategic assumptions permeating their respective remits. This organisational duality was heavily reflected in the basic areas from which each service sought to build its individual policy of vocationalisation. Working from a traditional perspective,Directorate General V conceived policy formulation in terms of the effectiveness of various apprenticeship schemes in Member States,to continue on with exploring the potential for guidance for those moving from full time schooling to full time employment and to analyse current trends in Member State vocational guidance services. ("Activities of Directorate General V in the field of vocational training",Document V/585/79,May 29th 1979 (mimeo)) The central assumption behind their activity was first,to uphold the histori -c dichotomy between Education on the one hand and Training on the other,whilst seeking to extend the range of activities included in the former to wider target groups - for example,wome -n and girls or those school-leavers with no opportunity for vocational training.

The stance taken by Directorate General XII ran parallel to this. The crucial difference lay,however,in the fact that the Education service was not prepared to accept the validity of the "binary model" of education versus training. From very early on after the drawing up of the Community Education Action Programme,the education service argued strongly in support of "integrating" vocational training into the education system. (Preparation of young people for working life and for transition from education to work",Document R/32290/e/76 (EDUC 52) October 8th 1976.) The policy to be pursued,it suggested,out to be initiatory rather than responsive. It ought to be part of a long-term strategy,developed across broad areas of Commission responsibility and bear down on the linkage between education and work rather than industrial strategy and training. Beneath this disagreement about the focus and goals of the two services lay a more understandable,though covert,agenda - namely,was Education to be an ancilliary to vocational training or,on the contrary,should vocational training be regarded as a service item in a policy whose running was made by Education?

Different policy approaches

The concept of vocationalisation therefore, had,like Janus,two faces. It also had two vastly different approaches in its development,depending on the particular responsibilities of the Commission 's services were engaged. For those responsible for 'vocational training' stricto sensu it was a matter of extending into compulsor -y education elements to strengthen the 'vocational element'. For those working within the framework of Education,it involved strengthening within the vocational training system those elements of general education which might serve in a remedial function for 'at risk groups'. The former built from the training system back into school. The latter sought to build from school into the training system. Complementary though these strategies might be,wide differences existed in what might be termed 'the formulativ -e stage' of their development. Without going into a blow by blow account,it is probably correct to say that 'policy formulation' as enacted by DGV tended to hew more closely to formal bureaucratic procedures and to involve negotiation within a legislative framewor -k through the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training,the Econom -ic and Social Affairs Committee and the 'social partners' ie government,employers and trades unions. This was not the approach espoused by the Education Services. Here policy formulation was,at one and the same time,more extensive,more protracted and,equally important,based on the belief that educational research ought to be a prior stage to the formulation of policy. To be sure,the Education section of DGXII engaged in regular discussion and consul tation with the Education Committee,the main forum representing the education ministries of the Member States. Nevertheless,the development of its policy relied on a most extensive programme of 'action research',designed not merely to ascertain the most fruitful ways of tackling the transition from school to work,but also to involve the education world from the grass roots upward.

This programme,perhaps one of the most sustained examples of collab orative research at international level to be undertaken,was launch -ed in the Fall of 1977. Then,it involved some 28 projects,ranging from Denmark to Sicily,from Berlin to Ireland. Today,it is in its 'second phase',the first having ended in 1981-2. Some degree of its scale can be gathered from its financial profile. In its first year of operation,total funding from all sources - Commission as well as Member State - was in the order of ECU 6,000,000 ("Imple mentation of the Resolution of December 13th 1976:progress report on measures taken at Community level',Document 5471/80 (EDUC 30), March 5th 1980.)

The focus of this 'action research' lay in six areas. These were:

- education and training needs of school leavers facing difficulty in obtaining employment.

- problems of poor motivation towards study and work and ways of stimulating greater participation by young people.

- compensatory action to provide better opportunities for specific groups, viz: girls, migrants' children,the handicapped.

- the association of vocational preparation before and after school-leaving age by strengthening cooperation between education and employment sectors.

- development of continuing guidance and counselling services.

- improvements in both initial and in-service teacher training the better to enable them to prepare young people for adult and working life.

("Preparation of young people for working life and for transition from education to work", Document 4/32290/e/(EN 52) October 8th 1976.)

From the standpoint of policy development, the transition project had two main purposes: first, to provide a series of networks across Member States, in which examples in one might inspire initiatives in another; second, to cut across formal administrative boundaries which separated education from training and labour market bodies in an attempt to move towards a broadly coordinate policy. In short, the 'transition programme' stood as an operational expression of the conviction, aired earlier by the Education services, which refused to recognise the established division between education and training.

Such a 'bottom up' networking approach stood in marked constrast with the legislative 'top down' perspective embarked upon by the vocational training services, an approach which emerged clearly in the Recommendation issued in July 1977, which called for the extension of vocational preparation to those categories of young people who were unemployed or face the threat of unemployment in the future. ("Activitiesof Directorate General V in the field of vocational training July 1977 to May 1979", Document V/535/79, May 28th 1979.)

Intervention of external factors.

Complementary though the two strategies for 'vocationalisation' might be, and despite the very marked differences in procedure, both services shared a common assumption at least up to 1978. This central assumption was the nature of youth unemployment itself. Prior to 1978, youth unemployment was held to be a cyclical phenomen -on, a temporary fluctuation that would iron itself out once the economy began to pick up again. From this it followed that measures to extend vocational training were conceived in the same light as the problem they were designed to tackle - namely, as short -term responses of a sectoral nature. From the standpoint of the Education services, the main task to be tackled involved a more thorough grounding in the basic skills the better to improve insertion to the labour market once the latter picked up. From the standpoint of the vocational training services, the goal of policy was, in essence, to extend provision by expanding the capacit -y of vocational training systems. This, effectively, was little more than a policy of holding youngsters off the labour market and 'stocking' skills in anticipation of their being taken up in a labour market context which itself, would remain broadly simila -r once recovery set in.

By 1978, few of these basic policy parameters held good. Unemploymen -t in general and youth unemployment in particular appeared to have assumed a permanent dimension. Unemployment was then, not transitional, but structural. Second, unemployment itself hid more wide-ranging shifts in the structure of industry - a marked shrink -age in the secondary sector and an even more marked change in the nature of work and the skills required by the 'new technologies ".

These external factors had wide-ranging consequences for the 'frame' in which policy was considered. First,they cast doubts on the validity of a policy based on short-term ad hoc responses. Second, and more specifically,they called into question the strategy of extending the intake capacity of traditional vocational training systems. They seemed to suggest that a prior requisite for policy development should be a re-assesment of the role of traditional training systems and their ability to meet fundamental changes in the structure of the labour force. Finally,they re-opened a point that the Education service had made virtually from the time education figured as part of Commission responsibilities -namely, the high degree of 'administrative compartmentalisation' in Member State systems between authorities with an educational remit and those with oversight for vocational training. Though not recognised as such at the time, the upshot of these external factors was to give added weight to the strategy which the Education service had been forced to adopt as a result of the absence of a firm legal base for Education in the Communities' founding treaties.

Alternance:a new approach to the relationship between education and training.

Thus shifts in the 'contextual frame' brought about shifts in the 'conceptual frame' in which discussion took place. The fact that youth unemployment was no longer confined to either 'the disadvantaged' or to 'marginal' groups caused the Commission's services to revise their approach. Such a revision took place over the four years from 1979 to 1983. Essentially,it turned around the development of what might be termed a coordinate,cross sector strategy designed to bring together Education,Vocational Training and Employment authorities. It brought to an end what is best described as a 'reactive' policy and replaced it by a medium term,forward-looking perspective, in which vocational training was interpreted not as a vehicle for 'stocking' skills,so much as an active instrument for generating new skills and,no less important,new employment. ("The development of vocational training policies in the European Communities in the 1980's",Draft Communica -tion to the Council, Bruxelles,July 8th 1982,pp.1-2.)

Naturally,such changes did not come overnight. The move towards a coordinate,cross sector approach was,however,marked by two devel-opments. The first of these involved recasting the 'conceptual frame',the second,changes in the organisational context in which Commission policy was worked out. Central to the former was the emergence of the so-called 'alternance model' of vocational train-ing. Essentially,the alternance model combines a 'sandwich' course format with the principle of permanent education. It seeks to link practical knowledge derived from the workplace with a more theoretical grounding in training establishments. It takes the view that work experience is an central element in experiential learning. The significance of this concept is obvious,and may be seen as a key element in 'vocationalising' education. Seen from the school perspective,it seeks to supplement knowledge convey -ed in the classroom with 'real life' experience. Seen from the perspective of vocational training,alternance departs from the view that such training is limited only to the under 25's or that it should take place on a 'once-off'basis. The importance of the 'alternance' model did not lie simply as a way to impart greate -r flexibility to established systems of training,nor yet as a means of re-skilling both the younger generation or those in mid

career. It also had a particular significance in the conduct of policy inside the Commission. For just as the 'alternance model' predicated a new type of linkage and relationship between work and training,so it also predicated a closer collaboration between the two services of Education and Training whose policies had,hithe-rto,operated like the classic definition of political parties in England of the 18th century - two stage coaches going down the same road,occasionally spattering one another with mud!

Changes in the organisational frame were equally significant. In January 1981, responsibility for both education and vocational training was brought together under a single Directorate. Directorate General V now assumed the remit for Employment,Social Affairs and Education. The bringing together of the two services set the stamp on the move towards a comprehensive strategy first,to use vocational training as an instrument to attack unemployment and second,to link in with policy developments in other areas of the Commission's activities.("The development of vocational training..." loc. cit.,) How far the two services were now agreed on the basic priorities may be seen from discussions in the Education Committee early in 1981. The Education Committee identified two areas as crucial to the Commission's policy development. These were:

- the preparation of young people for working life.
- the development of continuing education and training.
  ("Outcomes of the proceedings of the Education Committee, April 23rd - 24th 1981",Document 6502/81 (EDUC 14)April 29th 1981.)

Beneath these two priorities ran a particular vision of the school system which,itself, might eventually move towards the principle of 'integration', at the upper secondary and the post secondary levels. Included in this pattern would be general education,vocatio-nal training and certain elements of work experience.

Coordinate planning: towards vocationalisation?

The relocation of both Education and Vocational Training inside a single Directorate accelerated the trend towards coordinate planning. By June 1981,the Ministers of Education endorsed the notion of inter-linked planning for vocational training and educati-on. Similarly,the previous month,their colleagues in charge of Social Affairs gave their blessing to this same principle. The following year,on May 27th 1982,the Social Affairs Council passed a Resolution on Community Action against Unemployment which marked a further step along this road. The new approach rested on five major points:

- strengthening the general level of education during compulsory schooling.

- the development of initial and complementary training grounded on a broad range of related occupations (famille de métiers)

- the drawing up of new options for continuing education of a general character to be available throughout an individual's working life.

- the organisation of such training,whether initial or in-service

upon modular units in keeping with the 'alternance model'.

- a corresponding reinforcement of guidance and vocational training services to underpin the development of vocational training.

A close examination of the documents circulated at this time amongst the Social Affairs Directorate reveals clearly that coordinated planning had three levels. These were: first, the political; second, the technical and third, the administrative levels. At the political level, the main objective was to bring together both the Ministers in charge of Education in joint discussion at Community level with their counterparts in charge of Employment policies, thereby securing agreement for the approach already under discussion inside the Commission. This objective was secured in June 1983, when, for the first time in the history of the Communities, Ministers from both 'sides' met, and agreed on a five year programme for vocational training policies up to 1988. ("Education and vocational training within the European Community: activities of the Commission of the European Communities in 1983 and 1984", Document COM (85) 134 Final, Brussels, March 29th 1985, pp. 11-13) At the technical level, the main objective was to redefine vocational training by setting up what was termed a 'stage de préparation' on the one hand and, on the other, to redefine its content to include the development of social skills, and finally, to place it firmly within the context of éducation permanente. At the administrative level, the main objective sought was to bring about coordination between the various services - education, vocational training, employment and social services generally - by local or regional authorities. Local or regional coordination was important for several reasons. First, because it formed the implementation of the principle agreed at Community level; second, following the experience of the Transition from school to work programme, local coordination was seen as key in developing successful transitional strategies. ("Interim report on the development of the Programe to the Education Committee concerning the implementation of the second series of pilot projects", Document CAB/XIV/170-EN, Brussels, September 1985) And third, because, seen from the standpoint of vocationalisation, it showed most clearly, that the process was not limited simply to those authorities in charge of schools or training establishments. If it was to be part of an overall plan both to reskill and to create employment, then it had, perforce, to involve local labour market agencies as well as both sides of industry.

The central item in Commission thinking was contained in the concept of 'preparatory stage' which later emerged as the notion of a "Social Guarantee". From the standpoint of its location in education/training systems, it was to follow on immediately after the end of compulsory education. Its purpose was three fold: first, to operationalise the notion of 'alternance'; second, to develop a wider range of skills including remediation than the usual pattern of vocational training; third, to instill amongst its 'clients' the notion that training itself was not a 'once-off' activity, but rather part of life-long learning. Thus, what the Commission had in mind as an instrument of 'vocationalisation' was a parallel sector alongside full-time secondary schooling for all early leavers and those without formal qualifications. Originally, the notion of a "Social Guarentee" was to provide vocational training and

work experience as a matter of right for all early leavers or youngsters without qualification. Its salient features were one year's foundation training immediately after compulsory education with the additional possibility of a further year of a more advance -d nature. This second year would be available at any period up to the age of 25.

If the nomenclature of the proposal was retained by the joint meeting of Education and Social Affairs Ministers in June 1983,the generous terms put forward,were not. Instead the Council opted for a programme consisting either of basic training and/or initial work experience for six months - and certainly no more than a year. The idea of a further year was not looked upon with delight! Even in this diluted form,the Social Guarantee represented one of the most comprehensive statements about vocational training policy the Commission had made since the original guidelines were drawn up in 1963. In addition to the usual categories of early school-leavers and the unqualified,access for women and particular- ly those in rural areas,was also given priority.

The Social Guarantee was not,however,the only example of cross sectoral planning within the Commission, for equally radical propos als were also put forward for compulsory education. Some of these may be seen simply as extensions into the school system of those principles developed within the 'alternance' model. Foremost amongs -t them was the notion of using the community itself as a learning resource. School authorities were to be encouraged to develop close links with employment authorities as a first step in creating direct work experience for the 14 to 18 age range,either in firms or in the community. This theme was taken up and elaborated the following year in the joint meeting of Ministers of Education and Social Affairs. Vocational guidance,counselling and careers' education,the meeting recommended, should span the whole period from secondary school to training and,moreover, they should be closely interwoven into the school curriculum.("Education and vocational training...",op. cit.,)

These developments may,of course,be seen in terms of 'lateral policy coordination',that is,the bringing together of administrativ -e areas,both within the Commission and,hopefully,within the Member States as well,which cover a similar age range. But there is also an element of 'vertical coordination' . By 'vertical coordination',I mean extending the planning perspective either to cover an older age range and thus other types of educational establishment relevant to it or introducing another issue transcend -ing both areas of 'lateral coordination' and thus linking them with a common theme. Two examples may serve to illustrate this process and,at the same time,show how vocationalisation,first applied within the usual domain of post compulsory links with training and the labour market,has been extended recently to embrac -e higher education.

The emergence of a 'Human Resources' Strategy.

The emergence of 'vertical coordination' as a policy mechanism can be traced back to 1978 and in particular to the Heads of State Conference at Bonn. One of the topics discussed was the potential of the socalled 'New Information Technologies' and their possible

impact on employment,culture and education. From the viewpoint of the Education service,the New Technologies merely emphasised,onc -e again,the validity of its original thesis,namely closer coordina -tion between education and training on the one hand and better articulation with the 'alternance model' on the other. Thus,whilst the advent of the new technologies was seen as a catalyst to the overall task of redrawing the map of education and training,it did not change the overall policy perspective which the Social Affairs directorate had embarked upon. On the contrary,they appear -ed to add a new urgency to bringing education,training and labour market agencies into closer collaboration.

Even though the Education services regarded the New Information Technologies as an element of reinforcement and thus,of continuity in their objective to redraw the links between education and traini -ng,they did introduce a new perspective into Commission thinking. This perspective involved wider consultation with other Commission services and,at the same time,brought education and training into a broader policy planning context. In effect,employment and social policy - the overall setting in which both Education and Training services operated,was itself only part of a more complex issue. This issue was nothing less than the future industrial viability of the Communities,faced with the challenge in the field of high technology from the United States and Japan. As such,it touched upon such areas as Industrial policy,the Communities' research and development strategy,the planning of regional affairs and finally,the question of innovation strategies and the development of what is known as 'the internal market'. The latter,scheduled to be complete by 1992,involves removing the final obstacles to the free movement of goods and services within the Communities. Within this 'ecology' of different policy fields,Social Affairs occupied a very specific niche. Its main task lay in the developmen -t of 'a human resource strategy'. This,in turn,meant that from the first,the measures designed to introduce the new information technologies into the education and training systems required extended consultation with Directorate General III(Industry) Directorate General XII (Research and Development),Directorate General XIII (Innovation and the internal market) and Directorate General XVI (Regional Affairs). ("Nouvelles initiatives communautai -res pour la période 1983 à 1987 concernant les nouvelles techno-logies de l'information et le changement social',Projet de Commun-ication de la Commission au Conseil' (version No.5) le 11 février 1982 (typewritten))

The 'Human Resources strategy' has come to dominate much of current Commission views on the development of both education and training, and was instrumental in changing,once again,the policy context in which vocationalisation was placed. If,in the early 80's,reform of vocational training was seen as a way of creating employmen ,now it became part of a broader plan to re-equip European industry by updating the knowledge base on which it rested. And,as Commissio -n documents make clear,the central element in this knowledge base lay in raising the level of technical knowledge not only in the active labour force,but those likely to join it in the future. From the particular confines of Education and Training,the advent of the new technologies imposed three specific priorities:

- training and in-service education of teachers and instructors through application of the new technologies.

- the appropriate adaptation of training programmes for young people and,in particular,the young unemployed.

- recognition of the needs of specific client groups including women and older workers.

By introducing the new information technologies into the policy equation as an element in reskilling,the human resources perspectiv -e extended the scope in which vocationalisation was set. If this served to reiterate the relevance of 'alternance education',it also raise the issue of balancing opportunities and provision for reskilling between young people and the older generations who,without it,were in a position no less precarious than their children. This latter consideration occupied a key place in re-defining vocational training as a process of permanent up-dating, rather than a 'once-for-a-lifetime' induction into industry.

Furthermore,just as the human resources strategy posed the need to cross link policy options across a wide range of Commission activities,so it also posed the question of 'highly qualified manpower', both in the field of research and in its supply and interlink with industry. The role of research in general and that carried out by higher education specifically in the developmen -t of 'high technology' is a matter of record. A number of programm -es designed to accelerate knowledge transfer between universities and industry have been put in place by the Commission. ESPRIT (European Strategic Programme for Research into Information Technol ogy) RACE (Research And development in Communications Technology) and,more recently,COMETT (Community Action programme for Education and Training in Technology) are amongst the more visible. ("Univers -ity-industry cooperation in promoting training policies to meet the challenges of social and technological change and industrial development in the European Community",Draft Communication to the Council, June 13th 1985.)

Strictly speaking,these programmes - with the exception of COMETT - lie outside the purlieu of Social Affairs. They are important,how -ever, in that they seek to develop closer ties between research, industry and university and also because,such links,originally laid down within the ambit of other directorates,are now becoming a central part of the human resources strategy being developed by Directorate General V. From this point of view,they are perhaps less an illustration of the 'vocationalisation' of higher education -though there are signs of this too which we will deal with in a moment - than of the process of 'vertical coordination' between different sectors of the education/training systems. To the extent that they involve higher education as a research base for industria -l change on the one hand,and on the other, as a source of supply of graduates qualified in the areas deemed relevant to the 'high technology imperative',such programmes are complementary to the objectives assigned to vocational training systems. They are,in short,a prolongation at a higher level of those objectives we have already seen applied both to schools and to training - realign -ing of skills in keeping with economic change, the expansion of 'work experience programmes' during undergraduate training whilst,at the same time, serving as a knowledge base to sustain the transition to a high technology economy.

Conclusion.

In any organisation with responsibility for defining policy and setting resources to achieve particular goals, - and here the EEC Commission is no exception - the priorities chosen are in function to the perception of the particular issue and the organisa tional context in which perceptions are apprehended. The developmen -t of vocational training measures over the ten years from 1975 to 1985 shows this clearly. From being an instrument for improving mobility of labour and confined within the usual bounds of training systems,vocational training has,over the years,assumed a central and crucial role not merely as a vehicle for modernisation,but also in gaining some measure of acceptance to the consequences, social,occupational and cognitive of that process. The role of vocational training,at least as it is reflected in documented discussion and proposals put forward by the EEC Commission,appears to have gone through three stages; the first,when it was seen as responding to an established pattern of industry,stocking skills and acting as a palliative to what was held as 'short term' youth unemployment; the second,as part of a broader policy sweep designed to create better coordination between education authorities on the one hand and employment creation on the other; and the third, when it assumed the status of a medium term plan to accelerate the changeover to a new industrial base,and as such locked in firmly with compulsory schooling on the one hand and the university system on the other. These changes in role,as I have argued,reflect equally pronounced changes in the way the basic problem was underst -ood, first in terms of youth unemployment,second as a vehicle for job creation and re-training and third,as a sectoral element in a more general mission,namely to ensure the industrial renewal of Europe.

Some may care to see these developments merely as the growth of the 'vocational imperative' and the rise of a technocratic view in which education is subbordinated to the overriding demands of industry. There may be some validity for such a view,though it should perhaps be pointed out that what is one generation's utilitarianism turns out often to be its successors' accepted orthodoxy until the next round of reforms hails in sight at which point,it becomes -for those opposed to it - a new utilitarian ideology. What this view tends to forget is that whilst it may be the right of individuals to refuse the opportunity to develop those competencies that may stand her or him in good stead at a time of social and economic change,this right can only be exercis -ed once such provision is available.

There is,of course,another viewpoint on the issue of 'vocationalisa tion' and one which,if implicit throughout much of the Commission's thinking on the subject,remained largely unpursued. This is the question of control and authority. New elements in the school curriculum,new training policies for teachers or vocational educato -rs,changes in the balance of student flows through higher educatio -n - all of which,in varying degrees,have been touched upon in the elaboration of the Commission's proposals -beg the question "Control by whom to do what?" Even if aspects such as these have no part in Community level responsibility - which in essence,reside -s in drawing up an agreed framework within which national authorit -es operate selon leur gré et selon leurs capacités -the way the policy frame is drawn up implies some measure of shifts in the

balance of power and responsibility.

The prevalent view of 'vocationalisation' tends to see the process in terms of an illegitimate intervention by authorities or agencies whose priorities do not accord with established practice and conven -tion. The "industrialisation" of the school curriculum can be seen as a particular instance of this. In point of fact,the process engaged is a rather wider one. As it emerges in the reflections of the Education or Vocational Training services of the EEC Commiss -ion,vocationalisation contains another dimension which is often underplayed in the debates on this subject. This dimension involves the application of 'power sharing' or co-responsibility which, first developed in the field of industrial relations,is now inserte -d into education or vocational training. The clearest expression of this principle which can just as well be understood as a disper- sal of power from a single monolithic administration or,for that matter,from a similar professional grouping,emerges in the various schemes for linking the school with its local community or in the various proposals for coordination between regional and local authorities as a way of developing more flexible vocational train- ing initiatives. Not suprisingly,no specific details were mentioned as to the particular format to be used or to the exact balance of responsibility to be assigned to different interests. Neverthe- less,the principle of "partnership" or co-responsibility is clearly stated. How it is to be effected remains a matter for the respectiv -e Member States to work out.

From this point of view,the evolution of vocational training policies in the EEC Commission casts a rather different light on the controversy surrounding the rise of "vocationalisation". For what can be seen as a negative development when viewed from the standpoint of corporative interests,may equally well be regard- ed as a positive one for those 'social partners' hitherto excluded from the enterprise. At the present time,we tend to identify opport unities for acquiring new competencies and up-dating old skills in terms of 'education' or 'training' simply because that is the way they were defined in the past. But it is no less evident that, by re-defining location in the education system,content,length and availability,what is emerging is not merely a different type of relationship between the two areas - education and training - but an entirely different "learning system" -despite the ghastly jargon of the phrase. It would be surprising if such a new concept did <u>not</u> require new partnership arrangements. That we happen to interpret this "new provision" in terms of the old - and,to be frank,in terms of ancient conflicts with accompanied the development of 'education' versus 'vocational training' - tells us nothing about the potential of the "new provision". What it does show is perhaps our inability at the present time to go beyond hide-bound concepts,or to maintain our debate within them.

In taking the EEC Commission as a case study in changing concepts and priorities,I am not suggesting that discussion of this issue has necessarily to follow the same path. But,by dint of being the focal point at which this issue has been debated at a supra national level, and proposals for dealing with it elaborated at a similar level,we can recognise more clearly some dimensions which are less evident within a national context.

If,as I have suggested,the process of 'vocationalisation' disguises the emergence of a "new learning system",whether such a system gives due recognition to established authorities or brings about

changes in the hierarchy of status amongst subject areas,is magnificently irrelevant. What is relevant,surely, whether such new provision will contribute significantly to "life,liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in a time of massive economic change.

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London,March 20th 1986.